

**Bounceback Card Analysis of NCI's Booklet**  
***Traditional Foods Can Be Healthy***

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## **Background and Methodology**

In the fall of 1996, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) produced an educational booklet titled, *Traditional Foods Can Be Healthy*. The intended audience for this publication was American Indians. The booklet emphasizes the importance of incorporating traditional foods (foods typically eaten by American Indian ancestors) in a well balanced diet, as well as the benefits of participating in regular exercise.

Since 1996, almost 130,000 booklets have been distributed by NCI. As of summer 1999, a total of 257 readers of *Traditional Foods Can Be Healthy* have returned a postage-paid evaluation card from the back of the booklet. This "bounceback card" consists of nine closed-ended questions and space for readers to provide comments or suggestions that would help improve the publication. This report summarizes the feedback and comments from the readers who returned the bounceback cards.\*

## **Findings**

### Respondent Profile

- Readers ranged in age from 13 to 86, with a mean age of 47. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the respondents were younger than age 50 and 37% were over age 50.
- Regarding education levels, 31% had received a high school degree or less; 28% had received some college education; and 39% were college graduates or had received graduate level education.
- While the majority (59%) of those requesting the booklet were members of the public, 41% of the respondents indicated they were health professionals. (Respondents were not asked to specify the type of health professional they were.) Health professionals accounted for 67% of those with a college degree or higher.

### Source of Booklet

Respondents received the booklet from a variety of sources. When asked where they had acquired the booklet, some respondents checked more than one answer, accounting for a higher overall response rate (105%).

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\* It should be noted that not every returned bounceback card had all ten questions answered. Total percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding and incomplete responses.

- Over a quarter (30%) of the respondents received the booklet by calling the CIS at 1-800-4-CANCER.
- Twenty-three percent (23%) of the respondents received the booklet from a doctor's office, hospital, or health clinic.
- Seven percent (7%) received the booklet at a small group or community gathering. Nine respondents specifically stated that they obtained the booklet at a health fair.
- Eleven percent (11%) received the booklet at a WIC or other nutrition program.
- Fourteen percent (14%) received the booklet at a pow wow, convention/conference, school, or church program.
- One out of five (20%) respondents marked "other" as their source for the booklet. Examples included work, mailings, NCI, parenting program, community food bank, Wal-Mart, library, non-profit organization, and from health educators/nurses.

#### Reactions to the Booklet

- An overwhelming majority of respondents (95%) found the booklet easy to understand.
- Sixty-seven percent (67%) thought the booklet contained just the right amount of information. About a quarter of the respondents (27%) said there was too little information and 2% stated there was too much information.
- Eighty-four percent (84%) said they would recommend the booklet to other American Indians and 4% said they would not. Several respondents specifically remarked that they would only recommend the booklet to American Indians belonging to certain tribes.
- Respondents were asked a number of specific questions regarding the usefulness of the booklet. Overall responses were quite positive.
  - Eighty-eight percent (88%) stated that the booklet made them aware of how nutritious American Indian foods can be. Six percent (6%) said it did not make them aware.
  - The majority of the respondents (84%) said that the booklet helped them to understand how to change their eating habits. Twelve percent (12%) said the booklet did not help them. Some respondents who did not find the booklet helpful stated that the information was too general. A few respondents mentioned that they did not know where to find foods recommended in the booklet such as eel, turtle, prairie dog, and chokeberries.

- Over three-quarters (79%) of the respondents stated that the booklet helped them to make decisions about how to change their cooking. Thirteen percent (13%) said it did not help. Some respondents commented that it would be more useful if NCI could develop a cookbook and/or individual recipes.
- Four out of five respondents (80%) stated the booklet helped them to select foods when shopping, while 12% said it did not help.
- Despite these overall positive responses, almost 4 in 10 respondents (37%) also indicated that the booklet did not cover information that they needed. Several wrote comments indicating the booklet only “somewhat” covered the information they wanted.
- All in all, the majority of respondents (91%) supported continued production of the booklet. Specific comments from those who disagreed included: improve/change the booklet, develop booklets for different tribes, and make the booklet better quality.

### General Comments and Suggestions

As mentioned above, nearly 40% of all respondents felt the booklet left out important information. At the bottom of the bounceback card, where respondents were asked for their general comments in an open-ended question, many respondents (72%) provided feedback, very often in the form of a suggestion for improving the booklet.

- **A common suggestion was to include more concrete information on healthy living and nutrition.** Some respondents suggested that the booklet be expanded to more general health and nutrition information. Some comments included:
 

“The booklet just asks questions. The information in this publication is superficial and unsubstantial. If you continue the publication, give it more depth and detail.”

“I didn’t really like it. I thought it was going to be more about nutrition information and better healthy eating.”

“The booklet was incomplete and did not connect. I needed information but it didn’t give me what I needed.”
- **Some respondents wanted to see more information on how to eat low fat meals, how to lower salt intake, and how to prevent or lower high blood pressure.** In addition, a few respondents suggested that the booklet should be part of a series of booklets, or part of a discussion group/seminar on healthy eating.
- **Fourteen percent (14%) of all of the bounce back responses commented on the booklet’s narrow geographic scope.** The majority of the responses indicated that the booklet was focused primarily on Northeastern and Plains Tribes and had little or

no value for Native people living in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Forty-five percent (45%) of the responses recommended that the booklet's scope be expanded to include more information relevant to Alaskan Native populations. Two respondents suggested:

“Include a page for local tribes to add their food and where they are selected from.”

“Include a map explaining which foods are found where. For example, in the Southwest, cactus and many leafed plants are common foods. The publication should include more locations of other tribes and urban groups, and it should express its limitations.”

- **A number of respondents commented that many of the traditional foods (squirrel, buffalo berries, antelope, etc.) were not easy to acquire in today's supermarkets.** Several respondents remarked that eating these foods today is “unfeasible,” “unrealistic,” and “would only be possible for those who lived on reservations.” Another respondent advised that today's American Indians are concerned with convenience and that the traditional foods mentioned are not very easy to obtain. Respondents suggested that the booklet give examples of contemporary fruits, meats, and vegetables that offer similar health benefits/nutritional value as found in traditional foods.
- **Approximately 12% of all responses requested some sort of recipe book or a menu with details on how to prepare traditional dishes.** Many respondents suggested including recipes for new ways of cooking traditional foods or a starter menu providing information on how to prepare healthier foods.
- **The food pyramid schema on page nine received criticism. A few respondents commented that:**
  - “The title above the pyramid that reads ‘Some Publications of Interest Include’ is a bit misleading.”
  - “It was confusing [referring to title and content of pyramid].”
  - “Another pyramid should be created using the recommended traditional foods.”
  - “The information included in the pyramid was too small to read.”
- **A few respondents remarked on the literacy level and format of the publication.** Two respondents complimented the booklet on its easy-to-read format, while three others found the low literacy language to be “simplistic,” and “idiotic.” Other formatting suggestions include the following:

“Have fewer questions. Use some space to list clear information and a clear diagram of required healthy food Native Americans can choose today at supermarket.”

“Have the format changed to a story, so that it’s both fun and educational.”

“Good ideas, but there is too much information per page for the average reservation reader.”

- **A few respondents commented on the attractiveness of the booklet, complimenting its color scheme, artwork, and the size of the font.** Two respondents, however, felt that the publication would be more eye catching and effective if red, yellow, or orange were used in its design.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

According to the responses from the closed-ended questions on the reader response cards, NCI’s publication, *Traditional Foods Can Be Healthy*, is generally well accepted by American Indian families. However, feedback from the open-ended question suggests that the booklet may need some revising.

Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) provided feedback in the open-ended “Comments” question at the end of the bounceback card. While the booklet received a moderate number of positive compliments (25% of all open-ended responses were complimentary), a substantial proportion of responses (with a high degree of uniformity) requested more general health and nutrition information geared towards a broader range of Native American audiences. Specifically, over one-third (37%) of the respondents felt the booklet did not cover information that they needed. Some respondents suggested that booklet include information for specific tribes, such as those found in the Pacific Northwest and Alaskan regions. In addition, respondents recommended that the booklet seek to highlight traditional foods that are easy to find and convenient to prepare. Many respondents also suggested that recipes and other tips for healthy cooking be included in the booklet.

In summary, although 84% of the respondents said they would recommend the booklet to other American Indians and 91% said its production should be continued, a substantial number of the open-ended comments suggested that modifications to the booklet would be appropriate. Based on the larger proportion of respondents who provided this kind of feedback, relative to other bounceback card analyses conducted by NCI, it is recommended that these modifications/revisions be made even if current supplies of the booklet are adequate. It will also be important, at such time that the booklet is revised, to pre-test it among members of the intended audience before final publication.

## **APPENDIX**